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JANUARY 2020 | VOLUME 11 ISSUE 1

YOUR DONATION BENEFITS THE VENDORS.  
PLEASE BUY ONLY FROM BADGED VENDORS.

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.  
weighed in on the mis-education of  
America's children. **Page 4**



MEET YOUR  
VENDOR: **CHRIS  
ELLIS, PAGE 3**

# GROUNDCOVER

NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP | WASHTENAW COUNTY, MICH.



## HOUSED

- Homelessness meets communal living. **Page 2**
- Update on Washtenaw County's Blueprint to End Homelessness. **Page 7**
- Mental Health Millage-funded programs underway. **Page 6**



# Communal living: a missing link in ending chronic homelessness

**JIM CLARK**  
Groundcover vendor No. 139

There is more to homelessness than simply housing. The missing piece is that people need to be cared for and have people to care about. If people are given the opportunity to behave as if they are in a family or community, then their need for “home” will be satisfied. Communal living models the extended family dynamic. If communal living centers were publicly funded, managing the homelessness epidemic would be more effective.

When considering homelessness, part of the puzzle seems to be in the definition of “home” and “homeless.” Some agencies define homeless as “unable to stay at last domicile and no safe or adequate arrangement is immediately available.” However, a closer look reveals a relationship between the stigmas of homelessness and unobserved, untreated interpersonal struggles that may be the biggest obstacles to escaping homelessness.

The battle is twofold. On the one hand, a person who is homeless has a number of tasks before

them in order to change their life situation. Aside from solving the obvious problems, they must also maintain a certain level of self-care, for both obvious and not-so-obvious reasons. The not-so-obvious reason is social.

Self-love in this article is defined by the level of self-care and unconditional acceptance one gives oneself. A person who goes to necessary lengths to stay healthy, practice good hygiene, and seek out genuine connection and growth experiences shows a large degree of self-love. However, that must be tempered with the second characteristic of self-love: unconditional acceptance. What keeps this in check is that making genuine connections means having to care for others as well. It is a facet of self-love to practice other-love to a significant degree. Without genuine connections, unconditional acceptance becomes narcissism.

Delving deeper into self-care, taking care of needs requires not only effort from the individual, but from the community as well. It is worthwhile to remember that humans are social

See **COMMUNAL LIVING** page 10 ➡



Tiny house communities are one way to address the social aspect of creating a home. A house provides protection but human connections make a home.

# Why I Sell Groundcover News



This year will make seven years I have been selling Groundcover News. The time has gone by so fast that it seems like yesterday when I submitted

my first article.

During this time, I have shared with countless people how the concept of the street paper saved me after I slipped through the cracks following a large teacher layoff.

Yet some assumed that I have been forced into selling the street paper much like an indentured servant. One person even scolded an agency that would force me to stand out in the cold “giving out” pamphlets.

Another well-meaning, concerned individual offered to help me get back into teaching, adding her presumption that I would prefer having a teaching

job over selling a paper on the street.

It is difficult to explain to the uninitiated why this paper means so much to me and why I made the decision to even abandon seeking a full-time teaching position and instead focus my energies on my Groundcover sales.

I try to reveal that this simple model of entrepreneurship has been transforming and has resulted in my feeling empowered, strong and in control of my life. It has offered me an unexpected sense of pride and confidence that can only emerge from overcoming struggles I could never have imagined I would ever face.

Selling Groundcover has offered me the timeless and fundamental skills of a salesperson. It has presented me with a tool to survive a social ill that should otherwise have destroyed me utterly.

Further, writing and selling the Groundcover keeps me intimately connected to the struggles of the homeless crisis and fuels my passion to end it.

While many assume that vendors are begging for money, we are actually a robust sales team that supports one

See **GROUNDCOVER** page 3 ➡

## GROUNDCOVER

**Mission**  
Creating opportunity and a voice for low-income people while taking action to end homelessness and poverty.

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## MEET YOUR VENDOR



**Chris Ellis, vendor No. 483**

**In one sentence, who are you?**  
Someone living his space in humanity.

**Where do you normally sell Groundcover?**  
The YMCA.

**When and why did you start selling Groundcover?**  
Last winter, for income.

**What's your favorite thing about selling Groundcover?**  
Really, it is interacting with people.

**What is a typical day like for you?**  
I typically start selling in the early morning, then again later in the evening.

**What is something our readers should know about you?**  
I enjoy writing poetry and some of you have appreciated the ones that Groundcover has published.

**What is the most interesting thing that's ever happened to you while selling Groundcover?**  
It's just a combination of meeting people on a daily basis and realizing how unique that is. It really is amazing!

**What change would you like to see in Washtenaw County?**  
I just would like to congratulate the Delonis Center's rotation program, which involves various churches who open their facilities to the homeless. I feel that, with more encouragement, other churches would participate.

## Delicate

**CHRISTOPHER ELLIS**  
Groundcover vendor No. 483

She bends, a flower  
gives, and  
the snow won't seem  
kind in the morning  
fall...  
As her chair moves, she pushes  
on  
while leaves are green.

# The ugly duckling



I have adopted all my ducks near my apartment. I tried to feed them but was told we could not. I even had an ugly

duckling; it was his color: gold and yellow. His mother had abandoned him. The other ducklings were mean and would not let him around or eat.

My friend and I were going to take a walk when we saw a hawk swoop down and pick up my ugly duckling and carry him away. It was a nightmare in heck, never seen anything like it before. I was sooo sad and I started crying.

The hawk dropped my ugly duckling in the parking lot next door. I had a hard time having to bury him back in the pond. Now he is in heaven.

# Another successful year for Boober Tours



Looking back on the past year, we at Boober Tours accomplished so much on so many different levels. Highlights include building three advertising trailers and 21 pedicabs, completing my book (co-authored by my partner, Ariel), “Rising Out of Depression and Going Up the Royal Road,” traveling for special events, donating transportation for non-profits, reverse valet (taking people back to their cars after events) for the University of Michigan, and continuing as a success story for Groundcover News.

Goals for winter include selling all the advertising spots I have and to complete the Boober app. Now that Ann Arbor has green-lighted everything about marijuana, this will be turning Ann Arbor into a cannabis tourist town. We will be developing free marijuana tours courtesy of Kushy Punch and Bloom City Club.

I am working on getting my driver's license back and am handling a warrant from 2013 that I did not know about. I am also in negotiations from a car accident I owe money on. In the new year I will be working with Legal Aid to take care of a warrant in California from 2002. Slowly but surely, I am working all of this out — getting my license back will allow Boober to expand to Detroit.

I also want to thank Groundcover readers for donating \$1000, which I am using for my crew and to handle my warrants.

➡ **GROUNDCOVER** from page 2

other and enjoys the challenges of learning sales and communication. I enjoy being a part of that diverse team.

Although I have written on some level for most of my life, this has given me an opportunity to have an audience and benefit from editorial guidance that all writers seek. I have received compliments from people from different backgrounds and people often tell me that they look forward to my articles.

Writing has always been my passion,

but having time to dedicate to it and even have an audience is a writer's dream. Groundcover has offered me that.

I sell it because writing is timeless, as are sales. That I have been able to combine the two and emerge from this crisis on virtually my own terms is probably the reason I will continue to put on my badge this year, giving me an opportunity to make a profit both in sales and in meeting a growing community grappling with finding the answers that will bring homelessness to an end.



# MLK and the (Mis)Education of America's children

The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character—that is the goal of true education.

— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



**WILL SHAKESPEARE**  
Groundcover vendor No. 258

In 2010, the National Assessment of Educational Progress administered a U.S. History exam, which asked 12th-graders to demonstrate that they understand how the quote, “Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal,” was connected to segregation in the nation’s schools. Only 2% of the 12th graders got the right answer. According to a 2013 essay by Harvard’s distinguished scholar Dr. Henry Louis Gates, “...a stunning 73% of the 12th-graders either skipped or received an inappropriate score.” Gates opinion is that it is no longer silly to ask, “What was the civil rights movement?” He also asked a pointed question, “What’s going on?” The miseducation of young Americans is a source of frustration for people who care about learning.

Gates said that “*Brown v. Board of Education* was not only a landmark U.S. Supreme Court case for black people; it’s arguably the most important case in American legal history and one that, more than any other, affected all Americans by making de jure segregation illegal, and integration the goal of our ever more multicultural society.” After reviewing a report by Mr. Khalil Gibran Muhammad, director of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture at the New York Public Library, Gates said, “The American school system is inexcusably treating the civil rights movement essentially as if it never happened, part of a collective, general amnesia about African American history as a whole. And we cannot allow this to continue.”

The Southern Poverty Law Center has tried to address the urgency of the miseducation crisis with the “Teaching Tolerance Project.” SPLC established a benchmark for a generally accepted core knowledge any student should have about the civil rights movement, based on leading textbooks and historians.

“A whopping 35 states received an F grade, which according to SPLC report means they cover less than 20 percent — or in many cases none — of the recommended content,” said Gates. Between 2011 and 2012, “only 19 states specifically required teaching *Brown v. Board of Education*, while 18 states required coverage of MLK; 12, Rosa Parks; 11, the 1963 March on Washington; and six, Jim Crow segregation policies.”

University of Michigan alumna Mary Frances Berry and her Yale historian

friend, John Blassingame, wrote a highly regarded book titled, “Long Memory: The Black Experience in America.” They documented the difficulty that the black race in America has faced when trying to get a good education. The proscription and the obstacles continued from slavery to freedom. During slavery, benevolent white men and women associated with the American Missionary Society, the Quakers, the Presbyterian Church and other progressive churches built schools and colleges in order to help kids from the slave communities learn.

Within the African American community, education and learning were very important immediately before and after the Civil War. Historians found that black children and their parents were so eager to learn the 3-Rs (reading, writing, and arithmetic) that they were willing to make the necessary sacrifices, including walking long distances to attend schools.

“Some 200,000 slaves were literate by 1860,” said historian Thomas Holt. During the national reconstruction project, victorious Union General Ulysses Grant and his Freedmen Bureau Director, General Oliver Howard, worked very hard to build thousands of schools and to achieve integrated schools. However, the 1896 Supreme Court decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which upheld the constitutionality of “separate but equal” facilities, dealt a huge blow to efforts to achieve equal education and the higher literacy rates for the black population.

Some writers and educators have long wondered aloud whether we as a nation are committing “educational malpractice” when we fail to teach children about slavery, civil rights, human rights and inequality in American schools.

But the dream of equal education lives on. In Detroit, K-12 students in 2019 sued the state of Michigan because they were not taught to read. A federal judge who heard the case concluded that the constitution does not require schools to promote students’ literacy. The case is under appeal.

A special “King Issue” published by

*The Atlantic* in 2018 claimed that Dr. King wanted more than just desegregation. Atlantic writer Eve Ewing said, “The civil-rights activist’s vision for education was far grander than integration alone. How disappointed he would be.”

When Dr. King visited the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor on November 5, 1962, he stressed the value of education and activism for achieving socio-economic mobility and, of course, civil rights. Dr. King had plenty to say about opening up employment opportunities, providing affordable housing and ending unjust wars. Surprisingly, though, on the specific topic of school education, Dr. King said less.

We know that Dr. King was aware that educational fights during the civil rights period were mostly local and legislative. We know he encouraged 225,000 Chicago kids to cut class in 1963 because the “protest was designed to call attention to segregation in Chicago public schools.” He was emphatic about the need for students to “focus on developing critical thinking skills and a moral compass.” Below is an excerpt of a speech Dr. King delivered six months before his assassination to students at Barratt Junior High School in Philadelphia on October 26, 1967:

*I want to ask you a question, and that is: What is your life's blueprint?*

*Now each of you is in the process of building the structure of your lives, and the question is whether you have a solid and a sound blueprint. I want to suggest some of the things that should begin your life's blueprint. Number one in your life's blueprint should be a deep belief in your own dignity, your worth, and your own 'somebodiness.' Don't allow anybody to make you feel that you're nobody. Always feel that you count. Always feel that you have worth, and always feel that your life has ultimate significance.*

*Secondly, in your life's blueprint you must have as the basic principle, the determination to achieve excellence in various fields of endeavor. You are going to be deciding as the days, as the years unfold, what you will do in life — what your life's work will be. Set out to do it well. If it falls your lot to be a street sweeper, sweep streets like Michelangelo painted pictures. Sweep streets like Beethoven composed music. Sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will have to pause and say: here lives a great street sweeper who swept his job well. If you can't be a pine at the top of the valley, be a shrub in the valley. Be the best little shrub on the side of the hill.*

*Be a bush if you can't be a tree. If you can't be a highway, just be a trail. If you*



Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with civil rights movement co-founder, Dr. Ralph David Abernathy, and family on the march from Selma to Montgomery, Ala. in 1965. Photo: Wikimedia Commons

*can't be a sun, be a star. For it isn't by size that you win or fail. Be the best of whatever you are.*

## Celebrating Dr. King's legacy

America’s first official Martin Luther King Jr. national holiday was on Monday, January 20, 1986. In the early 1980s, the U.S. Congress passed the law whose lead sponsor was the deceased Michigan Congressman John Conyers. President Ronald Reagan eventually signed the legislation during the second term of his administration. It called for setting aside a day in the month of January each year in order to honor and celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. King. There will be many celebrations and meetings across Washtenaw County, Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, and nearby school districts and college campuses throughout the month and well into February.

## Know and Go

The University of Michigan will present numerous MLK Symposium programs on the theme, “*The (Mis) Education of Us*,” between Jan. 13 - Feb. 13. Event details: oami.umich.edu/um-mlk-symposium/events.

From Jan. 16-22, Eastern Michigan University hosts numerous events around the theme, “*Rise Up Against Injustice*,” including a keynote address from desegregationist Terrence Roberts on Jan. 20 from 2-3:30 p.m. More details available online at emich.edu/mlk.

# Good job and good deed available as Census worker

**SHELLEY GRIFFITH**  
Groundcover contributor

The 2020 Decennial Census is rapidly approaching. Did you know that it is required by the Constitution to count every living person in the United States? The collected data determines representation in Congress and how to fairly divide billions of dollars of federal funds. Be assured that census data has strict privacy protections. All census information is confidential.

The Census Bureau recruits a staggering number

of people to complete the nationwide poll. Applicants are being sought in Michigan, where some areas (such as Washtenaw County) still need more people to interview county residents. Consequently, pay for census-takers in Washtenaw County has been increased to \$23 an hour.

Starting in March and generally continuing into summer, census-takers visit and interview household residents who have not responded to the census by mail, phone or online. Census Bureau employees often use a tablet or smart phone (provided for them) to record information at each household.

Census workers are employed within their communities and receive paid training before they enter the field. It is helpful to have a car or access to good public transportation. Hours can be part-time; schedules are flexible.

Individuals interested in working for the 2020 Census can apply online at 2020census.gov/jobs or call 1-855-JOB-2020. Federal Relay Service is 1-800-877-8339 TTY/ASCII. Applications will be accepted through the end of January.

Please participate in the census drive. We need to ensure that every person is counted!

## 2020 Census Mini Grant Competition

The Decennial Census determines political representation and funding for social services, community infrastructure, & more. That means we need to make sure everyone in our community is educated and prepared to take the census in March/April of 2020!



Have an idea to help us get out the word and ensure the everyone gets counted?

Apply for funds to make that idea a reality!

Learn more, including how to apply here:

<http://bit.ly/census-minigrants>

United States  
**Census  
2020**

Contact Peter Lindeman  
at 734.544.6714 or lindemanp@washtenaw.org  
with any questions



## Strange (but Mostly True) Stories About a Mother and her Daughter • Cy Kloné © 2012





# Programs underway from Mental Health Millage

Groundcover staff

Funds from the Washtenaw County Mental Health and Public Safety millage became available in January, 2019. Five initiatives were underway by late fall: addressing mental health outreach in underserved communities, mental health and anti-stigma campaigns for schools, and three categories related to housing. An additional grant will fund training county law-enforcement in finding non-punitive solutions to low-level offenses stemming from social ills, such as mental illness and poverty.

County Commissioner Andy LaBarre, who was instrumental in getting the mental health millage passed, said, “Washtenaw County’s experience with the Public Safety and Mental Health Preservation Millage is a great example of a community working together to identify a problem, develop solutions, apply those solutions and communicate outcomes. When it comes to human services and public safety, this is the most impactful millage we have passed, and the most substantial thing I have done as a County Commissioner.”

## Underserved Communities

The Washtenaw County affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness was contracted for \$158,000 to design and implement a mental health education and outreach program for youth and families in the underserved communities of Ypsilanti, Ypsilanti Township and Whitmore Lake. NAMI Washtenaw County will assess gaps and challenges faced by hospitals, community clinics, criminal justice agencies, housing providers, schools, religious organizations and community health providers in the three communities. They plan to train peer and community leaders to develop activities that address those gaps and challenges. Many of their target programs — such as the Ending the Silence campaign to share mental health warning signs with students, parents and teachers — are already in use around the county.

## Schools

The Washtenaw Intermediate School District received a two-year grant of \$107,000 for mental health and anti-stigma activities. Roughly half the resources in the first year will provide mini-grants to 17 area high schools to develop youth-led mental health campaigns. The WISD is also bringing students and faculty from participating schools together to share from their campaigns and activities and receive technical assistance with their

projects.

“I think that every one of us has struggled with depression or anxiety at some point in our life,” said Holly Heaviland, executive director of community and school partnerships at the WISD. “This puts funding in the hands of young people so they can normalize mental health — deploying what makes sense from a youth perspective — while helping themselves and their peers develop the skills and resources that will let them cope with and manage something we all experience.”

At the first convening on Nov. 6, around 50 students and faculty members from these schools heard about successful campaigns and activities organized by other community organizations.

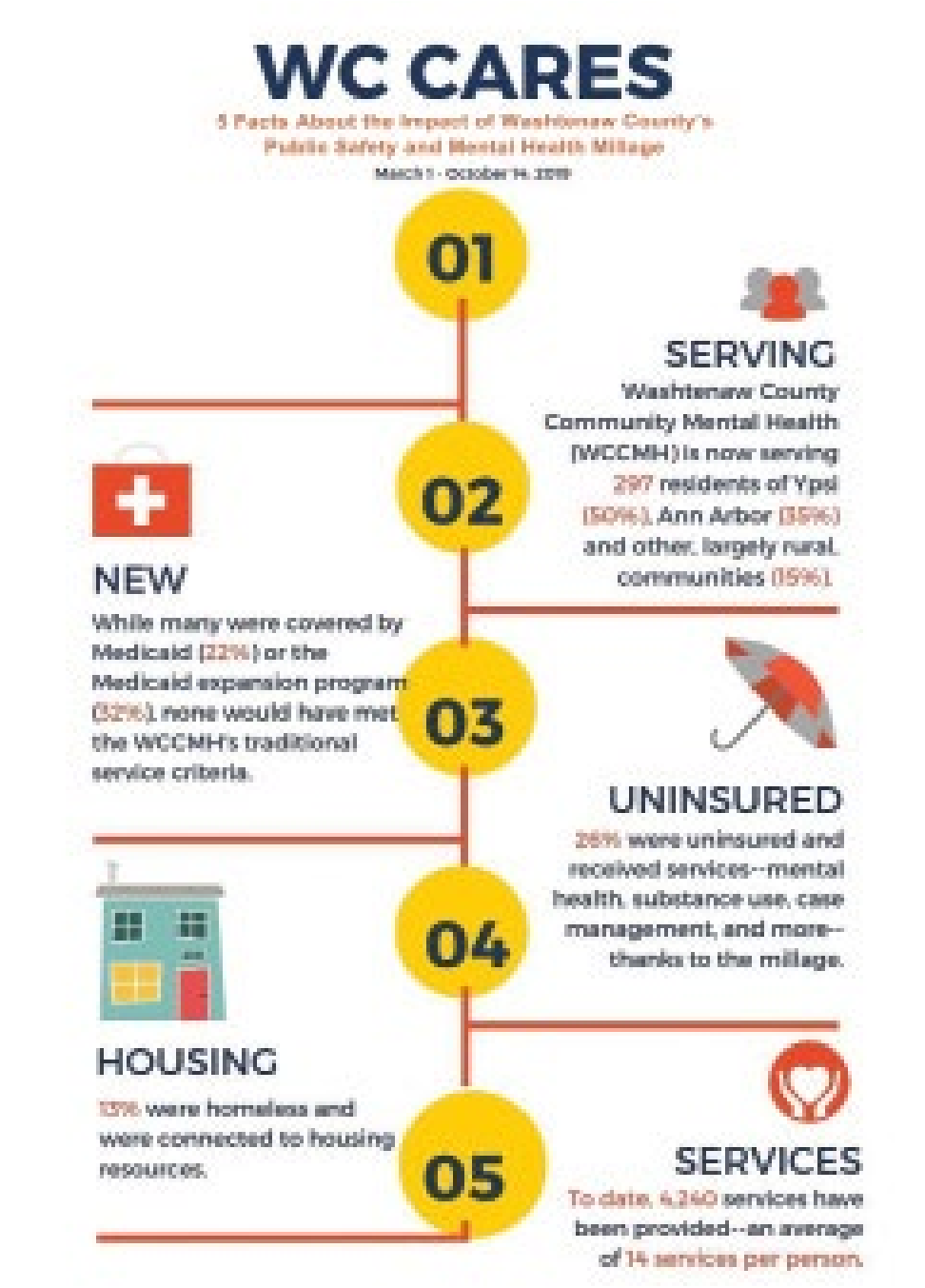
Faculty and students from Chelsea High School, for example, described their ongoing #WhyYouMatter campaign, which was publicly launched three years ago. In the first year, English teachers had students write about their identities, art teachers worked with students to design and roll out a school-wide photography project, and hundreds of students were photographed sharing their own #WhyYouMatter messages. In the second year, the campaign included a speaker series and prayer flag display in downtown Chelsea, and this year, the speaker series continued and a striking string mural was installed.

Community High School’s “Stigma Hurts, Awareness Helps” campaign (part of the University of Michigan Depression Center’s Peer to Peer Depression Awareness Campaign), the Washtenaw County Health Department’s #WishYouKnew campaign, and Friendship Circle’s U Matter program were also highlighted by the students and professionals who designed and administered them.

## Housing

A request for proposals to increase supportive housing services was approved and the submitted proposals are now being evaluated. The Millage Advisory Committee plans to award \$300,000-400,000 per year over the next three years to provide housing services for homeless or housing-insecure individuals with mental health and substance abuse disorders. (Supportive housing is affordable housing and services that help individuals with complex challenges live with stability, autonomy, and dignity. Positive outcomes often include improvements in employment, mental and physical health, recovery from substance use disorder, and school attendance.)

Three categories of housing will



address specific populations. For youth up to age 24 in crisis or in need of prevention and stabilization services, emergency shelter, housing-based case management and rapid rehousing initiatives have been prioritized and will be allocated \$90,000-120,000 of the housing services fund annually. Targeted supports for older adults include short-term housing, ensuring a safe place to stay until a spot opens up in longer-term housing, and short-term supportive housing services for adults in need of immediate, intensive behavioral health supports. These will receive \$60,000-80,000 in annual support. Permanent supportive housing services for adults is the final housing-related category and will receive \$150,000-200,000 annually.

## Public Safety

In the public safety category, Washtenaw County joins Detroit as the first Michigan jurisdictions to participate in the national Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion training. They will learn about alternative responses to low-level

offenses that stem from unaddressed public health and human service needs such as addiction, untreated mental illness, homelessness and extreme poverty. The goal is diversion through a public health framework, reducing reliance on the formal criminal justice system.

- LEAD goals are to:
- Reorient government’s response to safety, disorder and health-related problems;
  - Improve public safety and public health through research-based, health-oriented, and harm-reduction interventions;
  - Reduce the number of people entering the criminal justice system for low-level offenses related to drug use, mental health, sex work and extreme poverty;
  - Undo racial disparities at the front end of the criminal justice system;
  - Sustain funding for alternative interventions by capturing and reinvesting criminal justice savings; and
  - Strengthen the relationship between law enforcement and the community.

# Don’t smoke the ‘brochure’: Affordable housing stats only part of the picture

## JERRY CHARBONNEAU

Groundcover volunteer

The Washtenaw Housing Alliance hosted the annual State of Homelessness event on Nov. 13 to kick off Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week. The event, led by WHA executive director Amanda Carlisle, was well-attended — including representation from Groundcover News.

The question I’d like to pose here is: To what extent is the work of the Alliance part of the “brochure” that is our community’s wishful self-image irrespective of the actual state of affairs?

The evening focused on Washtenaw County’s Homeless System of Care. It was very informative and a bit overwhelming. Carlisle began with a PowerPoint presentation that addressed the County’s Blueprint to End Homelessness and the many agency partners participating in the work of Housing Access for Washtenaw County, known as HAWC, that matches those in need with available resources.

Morghan Williams, director of human resources at the Washtenaw County Office of Community and Economic Development, updated us on the numbers. The latest count, in 2018, identified 3,312 homeless people in Washtenaw County — a 4% decrease since 2015. Homeless recidivism in 2018 was 20%, a slight increase from the previous year. Veteran homelessness was functionally zero for most of 2019, meaning that newly homeless vets were housed within 90 days.

A highlight of the night’s presentations were the personal stories of three formerly homeless persons who gave moving and inspirational accounts of their lives before, during and after experiencing homelessness. The System of Care played a strong role in their stories of success.

Alliance board member Mercedes Brown ended the presentations with a rousing challenge to get involved, especially in advocating for affordable housing. It inspired me to participate in the Nov. 17 March for Housing NOW. (The March ended up with a robust showing of about 200 people, who listened to testimonies at Liberty Plaza where it started and the old Library Lot where it ended, attracting shouts and honks of support across Ann Arbor’s streets along the way.)

One of the Ann Arbor supportive housing residents I interviewed several months ago at Green-Baxter Court, a property of the Ann Arbor Housing Commission, expressed a lot of pain around the housing complex manager’s lack of concern and responsiveness. This is not what we would expect from the AAHC, a Housing Alliance member. Looking beyond the presentation to find the reality being lived by the clients of the system is what we mean by “Don’t smoke the brochure.”

# Affordable housing in crisis

## MARTIN STOLZENBERG

Groundcover contributor

The housing situation is reaching a critical point in some of our larger cities. The media is replete with stories that homelessness is a rampant epidemic. The problems of affordable housing (or the lack thereof) and homelessness are inexorably linked. When one goes down, the other goes up. Things are so bad that it has become commonplace for people to be relieving themselves in the streets of San Francisco and Los Angeles.

And nationwide, the affordable housing situation has gotten out of control. As recently as 2012, 78% of homes were affordable for a typical family. By 2018 that score had plummeted to 56% and the level is expected to fall below 50% soon.

Using the Federal Housing Administration rule-of-thumb, housing should cost no more than 30% of income. If you are one of the lucky ones earning \$200,000 a year, then you can scrape by with a monthly housing charge of around \$5,000. But if your household makes \$50,000 a year, close to the median average in this country, you should be paying no more than \$1,250 a month for housing and that might get you a modest two-bedroom apartment. And if you make less, like \$20,000 to \$40,000, you’re in major trouble.

Remember that 30% that is the high-water mark you should be paying for rent or housing. Housing and Urban Development says that 50% of renters are “cost burdened” — that is, spending more than that 30% level on their housing. Worse still, 12 million Americans spend more than 50% of their income on housing. That means they are probably struggling with other necessities like food, clothing, medical care and savings in order to pay the rent.

There is plenty of upscale housing around because that is where the money is. Developers are clamoring to put up luxury apartment houses in our cities and ritzy homes in the suburbs. Construction for high-end housing went up 36% from 2001 to 2013, while housing for low-income people declined 10%. It is estimated that there is a nationwide shortage of seven million affordable homes for the lowest-income renters, leaving many with two choices: live in substandard housing or become homeless. More people have low incomes and face eviction, instability and homelessness than any time since the Depression years.

And the high cost of living has led to a new phenomenon: the working homeless. Megan Hustings, director of the National Coalition for the Homeless, says that between 40% and 60% of the homeless population floated in and out of full-time and part-time work in 2018. One-quarter of them slept outdoors.

As rents go up, there are more people living in shelters, tent cities and SUVs in parking lots. Poor families are having an increasingly difficult time finding affordable places to live in large cities due to high rents, static incomes and a shortage of housing.

Today our Congress disregards our lower-income citizens. This hasn’t always been the

case. Adjusting for inflation, 50 years ago the federal budget authority for housing assistance was nearly three times what it is today. This is despite a significant growth in the number of those eligible for housing assistance.

It’s not that the majority of people want this situation to continue. A poll commissioned by *Citilab* shows that the majority of Americans (85 percent) believe that ensuring everyone has a safe, decent, affordable homes should be a top national priority. And over 80% think we should do more to prevent homelessness and think Congress should take major action to make housing more affordable for low-income people.

Meanwhile, the Trump Administration has sought to cut the Obama-era policies that benefited homeless people and supported low-income housing. (This comes from a man whose family made its fortune in the 1950s and 1960s by building affordable housing for working-class people.) Congress has refused to approve these Trump cuts, and the budget for subsidized housing has remained basically constant.

This static budget of around \$44.5 billion is not adequate because the problem is becoming more pervasive. The poor have no champion in the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Dr. Ben Carson, who desperately wants to eliminate public low-income housing.

The National Low Income Housing

See **HOUSING CRISIS** page 10 ➡

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**MORE LIGHT  
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# When the inn is full — a Mercy House dilemma

**SHERRI WANDER**  
Groundcover contributor

Many years ago, when Peggy Lynch and I were first starting Mercy House, I was doing some non-violence training in Iowa and staying at one of the Catholic Worker houses there. I was talking about the community and Frank Cordero, a long-time worker, said to me, “You know who the patron saint of the Catholic Worker movement is, don’t you?”

“Dorothy Day,” I eagerly replied.  
“Nope.”  
“Peter Maurin.”  
“Nope.”

And then I went down the list of name after name of early Catholic Workers I’d heard about, long time workers I’d met, tossing in names of those whose acts of resistance and civil disobedience are well-known and inspiring.

“No. no. nope...” Until finally, he told me. “The innkeeper; sometimes there is no room at the inn.” I laughed knowingly, “I get it.”

I did NOT get it.  
I... Did...NOT... Get... It!  
I’m starting to get it.

It is hard to say no. At least it is for me. But sometimes the inn is full. Sometimes the inn is full because every bed, every couch and every inch of the floor that someone can sleep on is covered in sleeping bodies. Sometimes the inn is full because the guy sleeping in the one bedroom needs the room to himself to deal with the voices, or the anger, or the sadness, or the withdrawal. Sometimes the inn is full because the family needs space to be a family, and that takes up the house. Sometimes the inn has to close for a short time so the innkeeper can get some respite and be able to sustain for the long haul. Sometimes the inn is full.

I can feel badly about it (and I often do), I can feel guilty about it (and I often do), I can feel helpless in the face of the overwhelming need (and sometimes I do), but I can’t change the fact that the inn is full. I can’t change the reality that the needs are great and we can’t be everything to everybody. I am reminded of a quote from Oscar Romero: “We cannot do everything and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that. This enables us to do

something and to do it very well. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for God’s grace to enter and do the rest.”

I’ve been thinking about the innkeeper. The Innkeeper gets a bad rap in the story of Jesus’ birth as it was told to me. What cruel and heartless individual would send away someone in need? But, as I reflect back on the story, I find myself thinking, “What do you do when the inn is full?” Was the innkeeper supposed to throw some other guest out because there was someone there whom he judged to be more deserving?

I guess when the inn is full you do what you can. And here is the thing that I’ve been reflecting on: the innkeeper did something. Now, from my current perspective, in my head I see the innkeeper not as a heartless monster sending away someone in need, but as a problem-solver. “Ugh. We are full tonight. I mean, full full. Got people doubled up as it is. ... But there has got to be something ... Hmmm ... There is the stable. Hell, it’s not great. I wish I had another room. But it’d be dry and safe. We just put down clean straw and I can bring out some extra blankets. It should be fairly warm. And if anyone cancels or doesn’t show I can run out back and get you. It’s better than being outside, I guess.”

We do what we can. And I’m trying to remember that sometimes what we can do is ask for help. When the inn is full, we can look around for other inns, or maybe an air B&B? We can see if there is a stable or a garage or tiny house or maybe a couch in someone’s home. Maybe all we can do is find a camping heater, a good-quality tent and some propane. We do what we can.

A few months ago, we had a guest staying with us referred to us by some friends at Ozone house. She was a 19-year-old woman who needed shelter for about two weeks until she could move to Jackson to an apartment she had been saving for. In the middle of the two weeks, there was a weekend when my housemate Pat and I had to be gone, so she came to us with the understanding that, for those two days, she would need an alternative place to stay. As the weekend approached, her alternative fell through and I found myself feeling very mothering and protective. I didn’t want to see her

spending two nights on the street or in spaces she may not feel safe, so I reached out to friends in the community — “anyone got space for this young woman for two nights?”

It felt like a big ask. “Can a stranger stay with you? I know you didn’t sign up for this house of hospitality life, but can I send someone your way. I don’t really know her, but she’s been with us for a week and she doesn’t seem like an axe murderer.”

And you know what, not only did someone say yes, offering our new friend a place for the weekend, but a few other folks said, “I can’t this time, but ask again.” And no one, not a single person, said “How could you even ask such a thing?”

Because realistically speaking, the folks who come to us aren’t axe murderers, or evil or any of those other big fears. They aren’t always easy guests. To be honest, sometimes they are genuinely difficult. (To be really honest, there are a few folks who I’ve worried would help me get in touch with my own inner axe murderer.) But mostly, people might be needy or socially awkward, or struggling with mental health or addiction issues that can be challenging, but not dangerous. And so many are amazing. Amazing, strong survivors who I have learned so much from.

Even before my ask, and certainly since, others have showed up to say, “Hey, if there is someone who needs a space for only two or three days and they are somewhat vetted by you, they can stay in my extra room,” or “I would only feel comfortable with a woman (or an older person, or I’m best with young people), but if you get in a bind again let me know,” or “I have a farm (or large empty lot) that someone could camp on and come in to use the bathroom.”

These offers are so beautiful. They remind me of the Peace Team work I do with Meta Peace Team. As unarmed civilian peace teams, one of our roles is simply presence and modeling — the idea that being a calm and peaceful presence confronting injustice in a war zone can change the zone of conflict and can model something different, model what is possible.

Perhaps, that is one of the more important things

See **MERCY HOUSE** page 12 ➡

### Sudoku

★★★★☆ 4puz.com

	9	1	3	6				
4		6						
3				8		6	5	
					4		7	
1	2		5		6		4	8
	4		7					
	5	3		7				4
						2		6
				9	3	7	1	

Fill in the squares so that each row, column, and 3-by-3 box contain the numbers 1 through 9.

### GROUND COVER NEWS

#### Volunteer Meeting

Please join us at our quarterly volunteer meeting to help shape the future of Ann Arbor's street newspaper! Discussions will include:

- community outreach strategies
- vendor recruitment
- fundraising
- volunteer recruitment & training

Thursday, January 9, at 7 p.m.

Groundcover News Office  
423 S. 4th Ave., Ann Arbor, Mich.

Bethlehem United Church of Christ  
Opposite the elevator on the basement level

groundcovernews.org | 734.263.2098

### Groundcover Vendor Code

While Groundcover News vendors are contracted self-employees, we still have expectations of how vendors should conduct themselves while selling and representing the paper. Every vendor reads and signs this code of conduct before receiving a badge and papers. If you discover a vendor violating any tenets of the code, please contact us at [contact@groundcovernews.com](mailto:contact@groundcovernews.com) or 734-263-2098 and provide as many details as possible. Our paper and our vendors should benefit our county. All vendors must agree to the following:

- Groundcover News will be

- distributed for a voluntary donation of \$2, or the face value of the paper.
- I agree not to ask for more than face value or solicit donations by any other means.
- I will only sell current issues of Groundcover News.
- I agree not to sell additional goods or products when selling the paper or to panhandle, including panhandling with only one paper.
- I will wear and display my badge when selling papers.
- I will only purchase the paper from Groundcover News Staff and will not sell to or buy papers from

- other Groundcover News vendors, especially vendors who have been suspended or terminated.
- I agree to treat all customers, staff and other vendors respectfully. I will not “hard sell,” threaten, harass or pressure customers, staff, or other vendors verbally or physically.
- I will not sell Groundcover News under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- I understand that I am not a legal employee of Groundcover News but a contracted worker responsible for my own well-being and income.

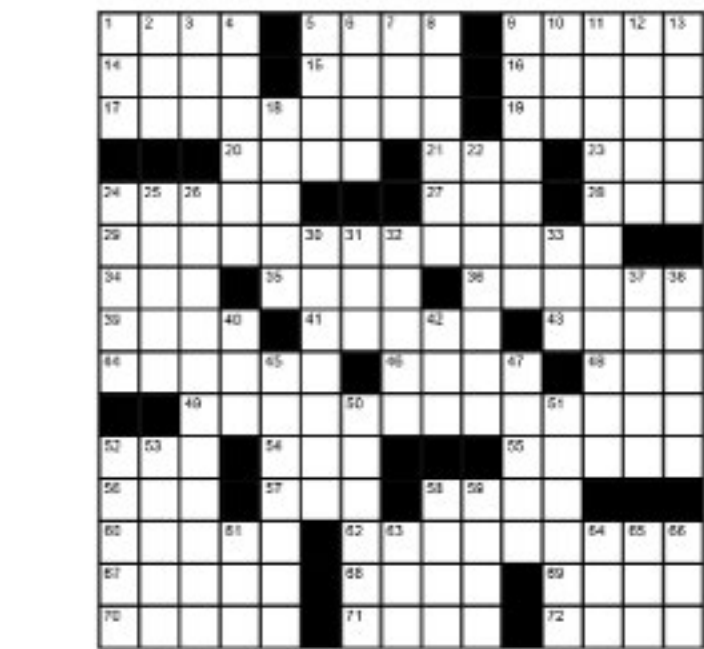
- I understand that my badge is property of Groundcover News and will not deface it. I will present my badge when purchasing the papers.
- I agree to stay off private property when selling Groundcover News.
- I understand to refrain from selling on public buses, federal property or stores unless there is permission from the owner.
- I agree to stay at least one block away from another vendor. I will also abide by the Vendor corner policy.

### Jamming

by Tracy Bennett and Victor Fleming

#### ACROSS

- 1 Words to Brutus on the ides of March
- 5 Bucket lookalike
- 9 Food featured at Poke Poke or Totoro
- 14 Ugly Duckling, eventually
- 15 First name of TV personality BanX
- 16 They follow deuces
- 17 Future opium flower that's also a bagel flavoring
- 19 Heavenly scraph
- 20 Lends a hand
- 21 \_\_\_ Kipper
- 23 "Ugly Betty" actress Ortiz
- 24 Ye olde word of woe
- 27 Year Confucius was born (B.C.)
- 28 Whale of a gathering
- 29 Truly difficult field of study, relatively speaking
- 34 Abbr. after an attorney's name
- 35 "Runny Babbit" writer Silverstein
- 36 Some spa units
- 39 Neither masc. nor fem., linguistically
- 41 Get a life?
- 43 Diner alternative
- 44 "Ihank u, next" artist Grande
- 46 Actress Rooney of "Mary Magdalene"
- 48 Boychild
- 49 Sport with ollies and kick-flips
- 52 Special effects graphics, briefly
- 54 "12 Angry \_\_\_"
- 55 Arid area/refuges
- 56 Get slower, in mus.
- 57 Some hang-ups?



© Tracy Bennett and Victor Fleming (published via Adobe Acrobat DC)

- 58 Cold War participant: Abbr.
- 60 Wrong-seeming
- 62 Super-sharp sense of humor, metaphorically
- 67 "Done," at the poker table
- 68 "Triumphal March" opera
- 69 Little green Jedi master
- 70 Music category... four of which are hidden at the starts of 17-, 29-, 49-, and 62-/Across
- 71 Annual high school dance
- 72 Fowl featured on a Canadian coin
- 5 Cognitive behavioral therapist's specialty, briefly
- 6 Some agreements as ca
- 7 Wrathfulness
- 8 William and Harry's royal mom, informally
- 9 Marathoner's need
- 10 Caterer's coffee dispenser
- 11 Sonic the Hedgehog's game system
- 12 Shenzi of "The Lion King," for one
- 13 Faith of 1.8 billion people
- 18 "Gadzooks!"
- 22 Fat substitute with declining popularity
- 24 Crisler Center, for one
- 25 One may be sore
- 26 Something bought
- 30 \_\_\_ of the Absurd
- 31 "Facts of Life" subject
- 32 Ascend, in a way
- 33 Bossie's chew
- 37 "In bad company," per Bierce
- 38 Belts out
- 40 "We'll \_\_\_ a cup o' kindness yet": Burns
- 42 \_\_\_ Paulo
- 45 Yoga session word
- 47 Got up
- 50 Catch shyly
- 51 Baseball great Strawberry
- 52 Daniel starring in "Knives Out"
- 53 One-foot putt, e.g.
- 58 High hairstyle
- 59 "The King and I" backdrop
- 61 "Big" coastal area of California
- 63 It's 21% oxygen
- 64 Court with flowers and song, say
- 65 Wedding vow
- 66 Sunbather's project, perhaps

# Hope Clinic adds Ypsilanti dinners on Mondays, Thursdays

**PONY BUSH**  
Groundcover vendor No. 305

The Hope Clinic is now serving meals at 5 p.m. on Mondays and Thursdays, in addition to their usual meals at 4 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays. The weekday meals will be running at least through mid-January 2020, while Salvation Army meals are suspended as they revamp their

county-wide offerings.

Area congregations are invited to take over a meal in this effort to fill the gap. The meals in early fall were drawing 40-45 diners. To partner with Hope Clinic in making lives better, visit [www.thehopeclinic.org](http://www.thehopeclinic.org) or call 734-484-2989. Hope Clinic is located on 518 Harriet St., Ypsilanti, Mich., 48197.



Additional volunteers step up to provide extra meals at Hope Clinic.



➡ HOUSING CRISIS from page 7

Coalition, a group of nearly 100 leading national organizations, calls for major federal investments in the Housing Trust Fund to increase the affordable housing supply. The HTF is an affordable housing program that complements existing federal, state and local efforts to increase and preserve the supply of decent, safe and sanitary affordable housing for extremely-low and very-low income households, including homeless families. This would be in the form of rental assistance and emergency cash assistance for housing stability and homelessness prevention.

What the country really needs is for more affordable housing to be built. But let's face it, developers have no great incentive to put up modest housing. The dollars don't work out. However, there is a way around this. Developers are always strapped for cash. Here is where the federal government steps in. A developer receives a federal tax credit if they allocate 20% of their apartments to people of moderate means, thereby creating mixed housing.

In addition, there are state and local sources for additional ways to sweeten the pot for developers to get more funding that encourages them to build affordable units mixed in with more expensive ones. This also helps counter the homogeneity that is so prevalent in our society. Still, there aren't enough

developers taking advantage of these incentives and there aren't enough credits being granted. The levels of the credit grants must be increased beyond the current level of 20%, perhaps to 30% or even higher, and the process simplified so more builders will wish to develop this mixed housing.

Creating individual housing for low-income people can provide the pride of ownership that will make for viable communities. In urban areas there would be a mix of affordable rentals and low-income private homes. This is what was done so successfully in our country after World War II, mostly for returning veterans. We should replicate this with a new form to make home ownership viable for low-income people through government subsidies. Expansion of national programs that provide housing education to assist eligible people in obtaining financing for homes is also called for.

It can be done. One example of this is Salt Lake City. Mayor Jackie Biskupski in August 2018 announced a plan whereby 2,000 new affordable units would be built in the next several years to counter the 7,500-unit shortfall. This will be done by waiving fees to encourage developers to build more affordable units. There are other facets to Salt Lake City's affordable housing program. The city is also expanding fee waivers for developers who set aside 20% of a project's units for low-income residents. In a short period of time, three developers signed up

for the new program. Also, a new 0.25% general sales tax will be used to invest in affordable housing programs. Salt Lake City has also created an affordable housing renovation program to help landlords improve the quality of their units. The city understands there is no one solution, but a coordinated program is required to bring about a better housing situation within the targeted five-year period.

This country needs more actions like those being taken in Salt Lake City. Besides a moral failure, if we fail to act quickly by initiating the necessary programs to provide more affordable housing, there will be continued and growing failure in our cities. Addressing the shortfall requires a \$90 billion increase in the HUD budget. That would put us at par with the spending of the 1970s, when there was plenty of affordable housing.

This is a lot of money, but it should be remembered that when there is inadequate housing and homelessness, there is a crisis of increased health care costs, lost work productivity, decreased educational attainment, lowered tax revenues and more social instability leading to disruptive families. That is a bigger price to pay.

By putting up the money and developing programs that stimulate more affordable housing, we will create our own Marshall Plan. This is the time to do something that will lift up our whole society.

➡ COMMUNAL LIVING from page 2

creatures, meaning they have needs that cannot be met by the individual alone; it seems to be in our wiring. There must be some kind of interaction with their surrounding fellows, whatever their relationship may be. The ingeniousness of this system of need is that, in order for it to be met, one must meet the need in someone else. We not only need to be loved, but we need to love someone else, however that may present itself in a relationship.

This is where the helping agencies often miss the mark. Without being able to care for, as well as be cared for, the basic need for love and belonging is not met. Therefore, the homeless condition remains, even after someone has been housed.

During homelessness, the network of intimacy — friends and family — may be greatly, if not entirely, compromised. This can lead to a feeling of despair and hopelessness that could be life-threatening. Generally speaking, homeless people have no support system. Even if they have shelter, a shelter is not "home." Staying warm and dry, having a place to keep belongings and having a place to go at the end of the day does not replace human connection. If no one knows or cares that you are in an apartment, that apartment is not "home."

Being housed, fed, protected, loved and needed all add up to being home. But for many who have been

homeless, the traditional home, made of wives, husbands, children, mothers, fathers, cousins, brothers and sisters, does not exist or is woefully inadequate. A survivor of homelessness might tell you that a roof over their head is only a small part of the picture. Having to live in a homeless shelter (or a tent under a bridge) means there either is no family or none that care enough or are able enough to help. No matter the reason for their situation, housing alone isn't enough.

Publicly funded communal living makes sense as an alternative to the "one heartbeat, one bedroom" approach taken by government agencies and Good Samaritans. The issue of homelessness has to be seen as a group problem as opposed to merely an individual struggle. There is no complaint being made about the effort these groups put forth, only that their strategy is lacking.

The fix, then, would be to channel the energies of love, time and money being donated or allocated to the cause of treating homelessness into providing places for the survivors to develop networks of intimacy in which to cultivate a sense of belonging and importance. Considering that the majority of housing programs, both state-generated and non-profit, already house hundreds of people in a given area, rerouting the funds to purchase larger cooperative-living houses would be feasible. People must be given the opportunity to form caring relationships — with themselves and others — to truly feel at home.

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

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2	5	3	6	7	1	8	9	4
7	1	9	8	4	5	2	3	6
8	6	4	2	9	3	7	1	5

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G	E	N	R	E	P	R	O	M	L	O	O	N

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### JANUARY 2020 EVENTS AT BETHLEHEM

Jan 1 Office Closed  
Jan 2 Prayer Circle, 11:30 a.m. in the lounge  
Jan 9 All Church Game Night, 6:30-8:00 pm, Youth RM  
Jan 16 Prayer Circle, 11:30 a. m. in the lounge  
Jan 18 German Pretzel Sales, 11 – 1, \$1 or \$10 dozen  
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Jan 19 Renew Salon Haircuts for those in need, 12:00 – 4:00 PM Fellowship Hall

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10:00 a.m. Sanctuary  
10:15 a.m. Sunday school  
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# Chef Larry's Blessing (topping for bread)

**ELIZABETH BAUMAN**  
Groundcover contributor

1 large glove peeled garlic  
1 cup olive oil  
2 T. dried basil  
2 T. dried oregano  
½ t. salt

Emulsify garlic and olive oil in a blender or food processor.

Add spices, turn on and off to mix completely.

Brush this mixture over your favorite bread recipe or frozen dough before baking.

This recipe was published in the Ann Arbor News years ago. It is similar to the topping used at Gandy Dancer. It can also be used a rub for meats or fish.

## ➔ MERCY HOUSE from page 8

that houses of hospitality do: model what is possible. "It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for God's grace to enter and do the rest."

What is possible? What do we do when the inn is full?

Let's each of us consider ourselves, our gathering places, churches, mosques, synagogues, houses of worship, community centers, even our homes, and plan to do what is possible. Planning could even be as small as making a mental inventory of who you know who may be at risk in colder temperatures and making contact with them. This inventory could also mean looking at one's personal space, and considering one's spare room, couch, blankets, pillows. Are there spaces for others?

I do believe this is how we wage love. My life has showed me again and again that fierce love becomes manifest in the doing and develops in the sharing. We know we are "in this together." Our love waged is powerful and when shared in the spirit of solidarity and mutual aid creates new possibilities. It becomes possible to open our eyes and hearts to the stranger who is without shelter in a greater way. We begin to heal ourselves and we begin to heal our society. We begin to shift the paradigm. Together.

No pressure, but our greatest need right now is winter gear: coats, hats, gloves, boots, warm hoodies and such. And, as always, socks. They can be dropped off at any of the MISSION locations.



## HELP WANTED: Assistant Director/ Publisher for Groundcover News

Seeking mature, energetic, self-motivated, compassionate adult to: manage our office, coordinate volunteers, organize materials for production, assist with selling and billing advertising

**REQUIREMENTS:** knows word processing, spreadsheet programs and basic business practices; good organizational and interpersonal skills

**DESIRED:** MSW or experience in social work, journalism, business administration or management

Send resumes to [contact@groundcovernews.com](mailto:contact@groundcovernews.com)



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**Come Worship With Us!**

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